

## **INFORMATION ON DEPARTMENT OF STATE EMPLOYMENT FOR FAMILY MEMBERS RETURNING FROM OVERSEAS**

Many eligible family members (EFMs) are interested in employment at the Department of State during their spouse's assignments in Washington. Working at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad can be an important first step to acquire knowledge, skills and experience that increase competitiveness. However, EFMs should be aware of both the government regulations and their own personal responsibilities.

Employment is not automatic or even easy, but there are things an EFM can do to improve employment opportunities. The Department of State has limited hiring and follows strict personnel regulations. EFMs interested in finding a job in the Department of State need to know the following:

1. **Executive Order Eligibility.** This can be earned by working for a total of 52 weeks or one year in a part-time, intermittent or temporary (PIT) position or Family Member Appointment (FMA) position overseas. This must be proven with Personnel Action Forms (SF-50s) showing appointment date and termination (or conversion) date. Individuals can combine different PIT and FMA jobs to total one year or more, as long as they have not been assigned to Washington in between jobs. This is very important because it gives non-competitive eligibility to apply for civil service status positions at the Department of State and in the Federal Government. Executive Order Eligibility is good for three years after return to the United States. Complete regulations can be found in 5 CFR 315.608.
2. **Hand carry copies of personnel documents in a folder;** avoid packing them in the household shipment. The folder should include a recent SF-171 or resume, SF-50s (Notice of Personnel Action), performance evaluations, proof of security clearance, awards, etc. Also, if relevant, include some writing samples. Ask the personnel office at post for a review of the post personnel file and make photocopies of anything that is missing. Appointment and termination SF-50s are especially important because they show the amount of time worked for the government, type of appointment, service computation date, salary and grade, and other information.

3. If an EFM is on an FMA, they should check with the personnel office at post to ensure that when they leave the position they will be converted to INWS (intermittent no-work schedule). If an EFM had an FMA and is converted to INWS, this is good for five years after the original appointment, or until they accept another government appointment, or their appointment is terminated. An EFM should not resign unless they decide to accept a government contract or another appointment. If the personnel officer does not understand FMA, INWS, etc., please ask them to contact the regional bureau's Overseas Employment/PIT Coordinator, PER/OE, or the Family Liaison Office. If the EFM is on a regular PIT appointment, they should request LWOP (leave without pay) so they can be kept on the Department of State personnel roles for a limited time in order to seek another job in the Department. If the post requests LWOP, the Washington regional bureau may approve the conversion. LWOP is not easily extended. EFM's need to be actively looking for employment to remain in LWOP for longer than 60 days. Complete FMA regulations can be found in 3 FAM 8200 and the Internet website: <http://foia.state.gov/refer.htm>.
4. EFM's should check with the Regional Security Officer to learn the status of their security clearance. Many jobs in the Department require a security clearance. Most clearances must be revalidated after five years, even if the EFM continues working. Keep copies of the SF-86, Questionnaire for National Security Positions. Another interview with the RSO will be required. Many family members only receive a one-year temporary clearance because of the type of job they encumber. Other family members THINK they have a clearance, only to discover too late that the paperwork was never finalized. Lack of a clearance may cause delays in finding employment in Washington.
5. Each civil service job announcement has a specific "area of consideration" which defines the applicant pool. EFM's with executive order eligibility qualify as "non-competitive eligibles," FMAs qualify as "State Department employees" but also need executive order eligibility in order to be hired quickly. To clarify eligibility, family members should consult with the Family Liaison Office Employment Program Coordinator.

6. Put together a list of current references. Make sure to have names, titles, addresses and telephone numbers. Remember to ask these people for permission to use them as an employment reference.
7. Call the Employment Program Coordinator in the Family Liaison Office at (202) 647-1076 upon return to Washington. Set up an appointment to discuss employment, review personnel documents, and find out how to apply for State Department jobs. Sign up to receive the "Network," a biweekly listing of Washington area jobs and employment websites.
8. If an EFM has not had PIT or FMA jobs overseas, but worked under a personal service contract (PSC) instead, they will NOT have earned Executive Order Eligibility. However, FLO can provide contact information for contractors here who have positions in private industry or contract work with government agencies.
9. If EFMs have access to the internet, they can begin their job search early. Two useful websites are:  
<http://www.state.gov/www/careers/index.html> and  
<http://www.usajobs.opm.gov> (Remember to check the closing date of the job announcement. Most government jobs are only advertised for two or three weeks.)

PPR: 2/09/00